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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS FORUM OF BANGLADESH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SONARGAON HOTEL, DHAKA
APRIL 24, 2014**

The Honorable Minister of Finance Abul Maal Muhith

The Honorable State Minister of Finance M.A. Mannan

Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, President, Federation of Bangladeshi Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, Founding President, IBFB

You ... each of you ... business and government leaders of Bangladesh ... builders of an ever more prosperous Bangladesh, the New Bangladesh, the Middle Income Bangladesh

Asaalamu 'Alaikum and Good Afternoon

This is a week of important dates.

April 24 ... today ... the one year anniversary of the tragic Rana Plaza building collapse.

April 22 ... Tuesday ... the third annual America-Bangladesh Security Dialogue.

April 28 ... next Monday ... the first ever meeting of the America-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement or TICFA.

These are important dates to America ... to Bangladesh ... to the ever deepening America-Bangladesh partnership.

I will speak to each.

On this day one year ago ... April 24, 2013 ... Bangladesh witnessed, the world witnessed a great tragedy as the Rana Plaza building collapsed, snuffing out 1135 innocent lives, injuring and maiming hundreds more, destroying thousands of families.

It was a day of unspeakable, unimaginable horrors as tons of fallen concrete crushed the lives of so many.

Today we honor the victims of Rana Plaza and their devastated families. We honor them by recommitting ourselves to do everything we can to ensure that Bangladesh, indeed, the world never again experiences the collapse of an apparel factory.

In an essay carried today in [The Daily Star](#) and [Prothom Alo](#), I quoted my mother's belief that the darkest clouds of life have silver linings ... I believe such is the case of the Rana Plaza tragedy ... I believe that from the rubble of Rana Plaza has arisen an earnest commitment to ensure that there will be no more Rana Plasas ... no more such needless, senseless loss of life.

The stakeholders of Bangladesh's readymade garment industry ... the buyers, the workers, many owners, the International Labor Organization, America, Bangladesh's other foreign friends and partners, and, most especially, the Government of Bangladesh ... have taken important steps down the path towards ensuring that Bangladesh's apparel industry meets international standards in terms of fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' right to freely associate and organize.

Nonetheless, the road ahead is long and the obstacles will be many as some endeavor to thwart this transformation of Bangladesh's RMG sector, but I am confident that Bangladesh will succeed in this historic undertaking.

I am confident that Bangladesh will come to define the new global standard for respect for worker safety and respect for worker labor rights.

I am confident that Brand Bangladesh will become a Premium Brand, a Preferred Brand in the global apparel market place.

I am confident that Bangladesh has embarked on a journey that will enable it to become the largest exporter of apparel in the world ... number one ... second to none.

I believe that Bangladesh's undertakings to ensure worker safety and worker rights in every apparel factory ... each and every factory ... no exceptions ... are the greatest tribute the nation and the world can pay to the victims of the Rana Plaza tragedy. I applaud the progress that Bangladesh has made so far in this regard; I commit America to be Bangladesh's steadfast partner in transforming the apparel industry.

America's partnership with Bangladesh has other dimensions as well.

Two days ago America and Bangladesh engaged in the third annual Security Dialogue. The size and composition of America's fifteen member delegation made clear the importance we attach to deepening, broadening, strengthening the security partnership between our two countries. I was pleased and not surprised that the Bangladeshi side fully reciprocated. Discussions were rich and diverse, covering security in the broadest sense, including the security challenges and opportunities of the region and elsewhere in the world, the various aspects of our military to military partnership, international peacekeeping operations, combatting terrorism and violent extremism, fighting the evils of trafficking of persons, of arms, of drugs, and partnering to deepen Bangladesh's disaster response capability.

During its four-day stay in Bangladesh, the visiting delegation traveled to the Bangladesh International Peace Support Operations Training Center (BIPSOT) to see for themselves this wondrous institution that I have been bragging about as largest and finest in the world. Be assured that my guests were suitably impressed.

The delegation also traveled to Chittagong, where they witnessed firsthand the fruits of the US-Bangladesh security partnership when they toured the Somudra Joy, a ship provided by the United States last year and which is now the largest vessel in the Bangladesh fleet. They also learned about the SWADS, Bangladesh's version of the Navy Seals that America helped to create, and about the Coastal Crisis Management Centers, a string of 30 specialized super cyclone shelters that America is building along Bangladesh's coastline to enable Bangladesh to respond quickly and effectively to cyclones, tidal surges and other maritime disasters.

Next week will witness the inaugural session of the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (TICFA) here in Dhaka. Again, America will have a large, high-level team, accompanied by a private sector delegation representing many of America's finest companies. Like the Security Dialogue, TICFA features a rich agenda of issues as both sides endeavor to identify and address obstacles to further expanding bilateral trade and investment. America is already Bangladesh's largest single-country market and its largest foreign investor, but I want to see great growth in trade and investment between our countries. I think such growth can play a major role in helping Bangladesh become the Asian Tiger of our dreams.

TICFA will also include a discussion of efforts underway in Bangladesh to bring about restoration of Bangladesh's Generalized System of Preferences trade privileges in the United States. These efforts are largely synonymous with Bangladesh's campaign to transform the apparel sector to bring worker safety and labor rights to international standards in the wake of the Rana Plaza building collapse and the Tazreen Fashions fire.

Thus, I come full circle, back to where I began in recognizing that today is the one year anniversary of the Rana Plaza tragedy. The silver lining of the dark, tragic cloud of Rana Plaza is that the Action Plan for Restoration of Bangladesh's GSP privileges in America is an important driver for transforming the apparel sector to global standards.

I close my remarks as I began by commemorating the tragic losses of Rana Plaza by recommitting myself and my mission to do everything that we can to help Bangladesh in ensuring that there will never again be another Rana Plaza.

I can think of no better way to honor those whose lives were so cruelly crushed out one year ago today.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*